



## HAWAII WOMEN'S LEGAL FOUNDATION

### ***Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation Announces Valerie J. Grab & Madeline M. Tomasino-Reed as the 2022 Recipients of the Rhoda Lewis Award***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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(HONOLULU, Hawaii) The Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation (HWLF) has awarded Valerie J. Grab and Madeline M. Tomasino-Reed with the 2022 Rhoda Lewis Award in recognition of their extraordinary contribution and commitment to public service. Each year, HWLF presents the Rhoda Lewis Award, named after the first female member of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, to a woman attorney who has devoted her career to public service.

"Valerie and Madeline are true role models and visionaries. They saw a need, problem-solved a way to help, and committed tirelessly their time, energy and resources to better the lives of children in need." said Lauren Sharkey, HWLF Board President. "We are so happy to be able to honor them with this year's Rhoda Lewis Award."

Ms. Grab and Ms. Tomasino-Reed were both Legal Aid attorneys on Hawai'i Island when they saw a need and wanted to be able to focus exclusively on child welfare cases. Approximately five years ago, they started the Children's Law Project of Hawai'i (CLPHI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit public interest law firm dedicated to the rights of court-involved youth on Hawai'i Island. CLPHI started with one office working out of a basement. Now, it has three offices (Hilo, Kona, and Kamuela) and has four attorneys, two paralegals, one office manager, and one social worker.

Ms. Grab is the Executive Director of CLPHI. A graduate of Reed College and the David J. Epstein Program in Public Interest Law and Policy at University of California Los Angeles, Ms. Grab has practiced since 2003 and advocated for children on Hawai'i Island since 2011. She was a Staff and Managing Attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i's Hilo Office, and practiced in public interest law firms in California and Washington DC. She

was a Research Attorney for the Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court in Los Angeles, and is licensed to practice in Hawai'i, California, and Washington D.C.

Ms. Tomasino-Reed is the Managing Attorney of CLPHI. She was born in Berkeley, California, but has been a resident of Hawai'i Island since 2003. She graduated cum laude from Columbia University in 2000. In 2009, Ms. Reed graduated summa cum laude from the William S. Richardson School of Law, where she served on the University of Hawai'i Law Review, earned an Environmental Law Certificate, and won a number of awards for academic achievement. Ms. Reed has focused on Child Welfare Law, and is certified as a Child Welfare Law Specialist by the National Association of Counsel for Children.

CLPHI empowers children through youth-focused legal advocacy. When children are the subject of court proceedings, their needs are often drowned out by adult conflict. CLPHI cuts through the fray, listens to the children it serves, and fights to ensure that institutions put our keiki's needs first.

In starting CLPHI, Ms. Grab and Ms. Tomasino-Reed wanted to make systemic changes to how we deal with children in danger of going to foster custody and those already in foster custody. To that end, CLPHI has several programs aimed at addressing these issues, including:

- Project Permanence:
  - Works with non-parental caregivers to arrange adoptions and/or guardianships in lieu of involving the children in the foster custody system and/or terminating parental rights
  - Works to establish guardianships or adoptions for children in foster care
- VOICES Project:
  - In high conflict divorce cases where domestic violence has been alleged, serves as guardian ad litem for the children to ensure their safety and needs are addressed in hopes of avoiding involvement in the foster care system
- Guardian Ad Litem Resource/Training:
  - Provides guardian ad litem services and training for guardian ad litem who advocate for children

To learn more, please visit <https://clphi.org>.

**ABOUT THE RHODA LEWIS AWARD:**

Criteria: Rhoda Lewis Award, which is named after the first female member of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, to a woman attorney who has devoted her career to public service. Consistent with the spirit of the award, the recipient should be one who has toiled in the trenches; one of the "unsung heroes."

**ABOUT HAWAI'I WOMEN'S LEGAL FOUNDATION:**

Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation, formerly known as the Hawai'i Women Lawyers Foundation, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1982. HWLF is dedicated to programs and projects that benefit women and children in need and promote the advancement of qualified women in all areas of the legal profession.

HWLF through its fundraising activities and events provides grants to worthy Hawai'i organizations who meet its mission.

For more information, visit <https://www.hwlf.org/>.

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